

TRADITIONAL MUSIC FOR NATIONAL ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

Traditional music plays a pivotal role in the cultural identity and economic development of Cross River State, Nigeria. However, its potential as a driver of sustainable development remains largely untapped due to inadequate cultural policies, limited funding, and declining youth interest. This study explores the role of traditional music in fostering national economic growth and achieving sustainable development goals in Cross River State. Grounded in theories of cultural policy studies and sustainable development, the research investigates how traditional music can contribute to economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. The study adopts oral interview, ethnographic observations of traditional music practices, and comparative analysis of traditional music in South Korea and Cross River State, Nigeria. Findings reveal that traditional music significantly enhances tourism, generates employment, and promotes cultural exchange. However, the lack of structured policies and investment hampers its full potential. The study concludes that traditional music is a valuable yet underutilized resource for sustainable development in Cross River State. Recommendations include implementing supportive cultural policies, establishing music-based vocational training, and integrating traditional music into tourism strategies. These measures can ensure the preservation of cultural heritage while fostering economic growth and sustainability in the region.

Keywords: National economy, sustainable development and traditional music

Introduction

Traditional music is a vital cultural asset that embodies the history, identity, and shared experiences of a community. In Cross River State, Nigeria, the rich and diverse traditional music practices, including the vibrant rhythms of the *abang*, *ekpe*, *ekombi* and *moni-nkim* dances, represent a significant cultural heritage. Beyond its cultural significance, traditional music has the potential to serve as a catalyst for national economic growth and sustainable development. However, the economic potential of this art form remains largely untapped due to insufficient cultural policies, limited investment, and diminishing interest among the younger generation (Attah, 2010).

This study explores the role of traditional music as an economic driver within the framework of sustainable development. It investigates the interplay between cultural policy and the sustainable use of traditional music to generate income, preserve cultural identity, and promote environmental stewardship. Grounded in the theories of cultural policy studies and sustainable development, the research examines how traditional music can contribute to achieving economic empowerment and community resilience in Cross River State. By integrating cultural heritage into the broader national economy, traditional music can address critical challenges such as unemployment, cultural erosion, and rural development. This study highlights actionable strategies to harness its potential for long-term sustainability and economic transformation (Gibson, Watt, Warmsley & Cornell, 2005).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to:

- evaluate the impact of cultural policies on the preservation and promotion of traditional music in Cross River State.
- analyze the role of traditional music to local and national development in Cross River State
- identify the challenges of traditional music in Cross River State
- highlight the comparative analysis of traditional music in South Korea and Cross River State -Nigeria.
- To propose sustainable strategies for integrating traditional music into economic and cultural development frameworks.

Cultural Policy Studies Theory

Raymond Williams' theory of cultural policy studies (1988), highlights the relationship between cultural policy and the national economy. He argues that cultural production is both shaped by and shapes economic structures. In Cross River State, traditional music has the potential to contribute significantly to the local and national economy through tourism, cultural industries, and employment. Policies that support the preservation and promotion of traditional music can enhance its role in attracting tourists, thus boosting the local economy. The Calabar Carnival, a prominent cultural event, exemplifies how cultural policy can create economic opportunities. The carnival, which features traditional music, dance, costumes and traditional musical instruments attract tourists from across Nigeria and beyond, generating revenue and creating jobs for the participants, artisans and business tycoons (Ayakoroma, 2013). On the other hand, insufficient support for traditional music due to economic policies focused solely on immediate financial returns can stifle the growth of this sector. Without adequate investment and protection, traditional music may struggle to compete with more commercially viable cultural forms, leading to its gradual decline and loss of cultural heritage (Omojola, 2010).

Sustainable Development Theory

Brundtland (1987) sustainable development theory underscores the importance of balancing economic growth with social and environmental considerations. Between year 2004 to 2007 under the administration of Donald Duke, Cross River State traditional music holds significant economic potential through tourism, cultural festivals, and the creative industries. However, realizing this potential requires policies that recognize and support the multifaceted value of traditional music. Economic policies influenced by sustainable development principles can create a conducive environment for traditional music to thrive. Investing in cultural infrastructure, such as performance spaces and recording studios, can also enhance the

economic viability of traditional music. Gro Harlem Brundtland's theory of sustainable development provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between the national economy and traditional music in Cross River State. By recognizing the interconnectedness of economic, social, and cultural dimensions, policymakers can develop strategies that promote the sustainable development of traditional music. This involves balancing economic growth with cultural preservation, ensuring that traditional music remains a vibrant and integral part of the state's heritage while contributing to economic and social well-being.

Literature Review:

National economy

Okonkwo, & Odey, (2017) referred national economy to the collective economic activities and policies of a country, influencing its growth, sustainability, and development. In Cross River State, traditional music, such as the *ekombi* dance, plays a vital role in sustainable development by fostering cultural identity, tourism and creative industries. These cultural practices attract local and international attention, boosting revenue generation, job creation and preserving heritage. Integrating traditional music with sustainable practices can drive socio-economic growth while protecting cultural diversity.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development, as articulated by Gro Harlem Brundtland in the 1987 report "Our Common Future," emphasizes meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This holistic theory integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. Applying this theory to the context of traditional music in Cross River State, Nigeria, highlights the intricate relationship between political ideologies, the national economy, and cultural sustainability.

Traditional Music in Cross River State

Traditional music in Cross River State is not just an art form; it is a vital component of the state's cultural identity and heritage. Genres such as *ekombi*, *abang*, and *moni-nkim* reflect the rich cultural diversity of the state and are integral to various cultural ceremonies and social functions.



Images of *abang*, *ekpe*, *ekombi*, and *moni-nkim* traditional Music Group

The preservation and promotion of these traditional music forms are crucial for maintaining the state's cultural heritage. However, the traditional music industry faces numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, lack of infrastructure, and limited market access, but with a committed policy, cultural sustainability can lead to the establishment of cultural institutions, festivals, and platforms that promote traditional music (Omojola, 2010).

Ayakoroma (2013) asserts that the economic impact of traditional music extends beyond cultural preservation. It has the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable development through job creation, tourism, and the promotion of cultural industries. Traditional music can attract tourists, both domestic and international, thereby generating revenue and creating

employment opportunities. This is particularly relevant in Cross River State, known for its vibrant cultural festivals such as the Calabar Carnival, which showcases traditional music and attracts thousands of tourists annually. Moreover, the commercialization of traditional music through recordings, performances, and merchandise can create income streams for traditional musicians and communities. However, the realization of these economic benefits depends largely on the political and economic environment. Policies that support intellectual property rights, provide financial incentives, and create market opportunities are essential for harnessing the economic potential of traditional music (Kiikpoye, 2016).

Recent case studies from Cross River State illustrate the impact of economic policies on the traditional music industry. The establishment of the Calabar Carnival is a prime example of how policy and economic investment can promote traditional music and drive sustainable development.



Images at Calabar Carnival, 2023

The carnival grew into a major cultural event, contributing to the local economy and providing a platform for traditional musicians as well as the artisans. The carnival attracts thousands of visitors annually, boosting local businesses, hotels, and restaurants. Traditional music and dance are central to the festivities, showcasing the cultural heritage of the state and generating

significant revenue. Other cultural festivals, such as the *laboku* festival and the *ekpe* festival, also feature traditional music prominently. These events contribute to the local economy by attracting tourists and promoting cultural exchange. Traditional musicians, dancers, and performers rely on cultural events for their livelihood. These artists often perform at weddings, funerals, and other social gatherings, earning income through their craft. In Cross River State, groups like the *ekombi* dance troupe exemplify how traditional music can provide stable employment for artists. Traditional music also supports related industries such as costume making, instrument crafting, and event management. Artisans who create traditional instruments and costumes benefit from the demand generated by cultural performances.

Roles of Traditional Music

The roles of traditional music and its impact on community empowerment includes:

Cultural Preservation and Promotion: Traditional music is at the heart of any societal event in Calabar, serving as a vital tool for preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Cross River State. The variety of traditional music genres, such as *ekombi*, *abang*, and *moni-nkim*, provide platforms for these cultural expressions to thrive. By highlighting traditional music, the various art forms are passed down to future generations, maintaining the cultural identity of the community (Ayakoroma, 2013).

Economic Empowerment: Traditional music generates significant economic opportunities for local musicians, artisans, and performers. Traditional musicians gain exposure and are able to monetize their talents through performances, recordings, and merchandise sales. The influx of tourists during the carnival also boosts the local economy, providing income for hotels, restaurants, and other businesses. This economic activity contributes to the overall

empowerment of the community, creating jobs and fostering entrepreneurship (Uzoigwe, 2018).

Social Cohesion and Community Building: Traditional music plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and community building. Music and dance performances bring together people from diverse backgrounds, promoting unity and a sense of belonging. The communal participation in traditional music events strengthens social bonds and encourages collective identity and pride among the residents of Cross River State. This sense of community is essential for social stability and cooperation (Omojola, 2010).

Educational Value: The inclusion of traditional music in major events has significant educational benefits. It provides an opportunity for younger generations to learn about their cultural heritage in an engaging and interactive manner. Educational programmes and certain social gatherings are some avenues where traditional music are taught to ensuring that these skills are preserved and passed on. This educational aspect empowers the community by fostering cultural literacy and pride among its members (Brundtland, 1987).

Tourism and Cultural Exchange: Traditional music is a major attraction for tourists visiting the Calabar Carnival, contributing to cultural exchange and mutual understanding. The carnival draws both domestic and international visitors, creating a platform for cultural dialogue and appreciation. Tourists experience the rich cultural traditions of Cross River State, including its music, dance, and folklore, leading to increased cultural awareness and respect. This cultural exchange enhances the global visibility of traditional music and fosters a sense of global community (Flew, 2012).

Challenges of Traditional Music in Cross River State

Lack of Institutional Support, Grants and Infrastructure: Traditional music often receives less funding and institutional support compared to other sectors. Government grants and private sponsorships are limited, making it difficult for traditional musicians to sustain their craft and reach wider audiences. The lack of dedicated performance venues and rehearsal spaces hampers the growth of traditional music. Inadequate infrastructure restricts opportunities for regular performances and professional development.

Cultural Erosion and Youth Engagement: Younger generations are increasingly drawn to contemporary music and Western cultural influences. This shift poses a threat to the preservation of traditional music, as fewer young people learn and practice these art forms.

Media Representation: Traditional music receives limited airplay and media coverage compared to modern music genres. This underrepresentation reduces public exposure and appreciation, affecting the economic viability of traditional musicians.

Economic Instability, Market Size, Pricing and Compensation: The market for traditional music is relatively small and fragmented. Economic instability in Nigeria exacerbates this issue, as discretionary spending on cultural events and products is often reduced during economic downturns. Traditional musicians often face challenges in pricing their services appropriately. Cultural performances are sometimes undervalued, leading to lower compensation and financial instability for artists.

Some states in Nigeria have gained support for traditional music education in schools, which has been championed by progressive political leaders. By incorporating traditional music into the curriculum, the state will not only preserve its cultural heritage but also fosters a new generation of musicians and cultural advocates (Uzoigwe, 2018). Moving forward, it is

essential for policy makers, cultural practitioners, and stakeholders to collaborate in creating policies that not only preserve the cultural heritage of the state but also unlock the economic potential of traditional music for sustainable development.

Oral Interview

Elizabeth Asuquo, Director, Cultural Center, Calabar. 7th July, 2024.

Madam: How do you view the role of traditional music in the sustainable development of Cross River State?

Response: Traditional music is fundamental to our cultural identity and economic growth. During the era of Donald Duke, traditional music drives tourism, creates jobs, and fosters a sense of community, contributing significantly to sustainable development. But after his tenure in office, the impact on sustainable development became limited by inadequate funding and lack of government support.

Madam: What challenges do you face in promoting traditional music through the Calabar Carnival after the administration of Donald Duke?

Response: We struggle with insufficient funding, limited infrastructure, and lack of exposure, which hindered the efforts to effectively promoting our traditional music. Some years, we experienced skeletal carnival and in a particular year there was no carnival at all.

Comparative Analysis of Traditional music in South Korea and Cross River State, Nigeria.

Economic Contribution through Tourism

Traditional music in South Korea, such as *pansori* and *samulnori*, is integral to its cultural tourism, attracting global visitors to events like the Jeonju International Sori Festival. The

South Korean government heavily invests in cultural content, leveraging traditional music to enhance economic growth through tourism (UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, Cross River State's music, like *abang* and *ekombi*, plays a vital role in festivals like the Calabar Carnival, drawing both domestic and international tourists. However, South Korea's structured promotion and integration into digital platforms have yielded greater global outreach compared to Cross River State's more localized efforts (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2021).

Cultural Industries and Employment Generation

South Korea has developed a robust cultural industry, integrating traditional music into modern media and education systems, creating jobs in areas like performance arts, production, and education (Kim, 2018). Cross River State also sees traditional music as a source of employment for performers, instrument makers, and event organizers, particularly during cultural festivals. However, the lack of extensive governmental support and infrastructure in Cross River State limits its potential compared to South Korea's state-supported cultural policies.

Preservation and Digital Innovation

South Korea has successfully digitized traditional music archives, using platforms like YouTube and other digital tools to preserve and disseminate traditional music globally (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2022). In Cross River State, preservation efforts are primarily grassroots, with limited use of technology for documentation and promotion. This creates a disparity in how traditional music contributes to sustainable development, as South Korea's model ensures long-term economic benefits through accessibility and global reach, while Cross River State's efforts remain largely regional and underfunded (Obongha, Etim & Anam 2020).

Findings and Discussion

Cultural nationalism emphasizes the promotion and preservation of a nation's cultural heritage and identity. It advocates for the celebration of traditional customs, music, and art forms as central to the nation's character. Alignment with sustainable development by prioritizing traditional music as a key element of cultural identity and cultural nationalism can ensure consistent support and investment in traditional music. Policies under this ideology would

include funding for cultural festivals, educational programmes in traditional music, and the promotion of traditional musicians on national and international stages (Smith, 2000). Empowering local communities to take active role in decision-making processes that affect their cultural and economic well-being will advocate for decentralized governance and community involvement.

Alignment with sustainable development include participatory governance to help preserve and promote traditional music by involving traditional artists, cultural leaders, and residents in the planning and execution of cultural initiatives. This approach ensures that policies and programmes are tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of the community, fostering sustainable development from the grassroots level (Arnstein, 1969). Policies could include equitable funding for traditional music projects, ensuring that traditional music is included in media and educational curricula, and providing platforms for traditional musicians to showcase their talents (Mulcahy, 2006). Sustainable Development promotes the integration of traditional music into creative economy framework, Cross River State can develop policies that support traditional musicians as entrepreneurs. This could include grants for creative projects, training programmes in music production and marketing, and the development of cultural hubs that foster collaboration between traditional and contemporary artists (UNESCO, 2013).

No doubt, Cross River State is endowed with traditional music which is a vital component of the state's cultural heritage and which is usually performs during festivals and ceremonies. Also, the cultural nationalism attracts cultural tourism, which boosts local economies. Events like the Calabar Carnival draw international visitors, increasing revenue for local businesses and creating employment opportunities for traditional musicians and related industries. Despite the potential benefits, traditional music often receives inadequate institutional support in terms of funding, infrastructure, and policy focus. This limits its economic impact and sustainability.

The influence of modernization and Western cultural preferences poses a threat to the preservation and appreciation of traditional music. Younger generations are increasingly drawn to contemporary music forms, which can marginalize traditional music. The broader economic instability in Nigeria affects the cultural sector, including traditional music. Limited market size, pricing challenges, and inconsistent government support further complicate the economic sustainability of traditional music.

Conclusion

The sustainable development of traditional music in Cross River State is closely linked to the adoption of effective economic policies. Cultural nationalism, community-based participatory governance, sustainable development, and creative economy policy each offer unique advantages that can enhance the economic viability and sustainability of traditional music. Addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities identified can ensure that traditional music continues to play a vital role in the cultural and economic landscape of Cross River State and beyond.

Recommendations

The government, policy makers, proprietors, traditional experts and the masses are recommended to practice the following:

- Establish dedicated government agencies and funding programmes specifically for the promotion and preservation of traditional music. Create a Cultural Heritage Fund to provide grants and financial support for traditional musicians, cultural festivals, and educational programmes focused on traditional music.
- Incorporate traditional music education into the school curricula at all levels by developing a comprehensive music education programmes that include traditional

music theory, history, and performance. Partner with local traditional musicians to conduct workshops and training sessions for learners. Work with legal experts to create intellectual property rights (IPR) policies that protect traditional music compositions and performances. Educate traditional musicians about their rights and how to protect their work legally.

- Collaborate with tourism boards to highlight traditional music in promotional materials and events. Develop cultural tourism packages that include traditional music performances, festivals, and workshops.
- Utilize digital platforms and technologies to promote and distribute tradition by creating a dedicated online portal for traditional music that includes streaming services, an online store for music and merchandise, and virtual concert platforms. Use social media and digital marketing strategies to increased visibility and accessibility of traditional music, expanded audience reach, and new revenue streams for traditional musicians through digital sales and online performances.

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